

## Bailey and Morgan .... artists in the woods

Jesse Morgan and Aaron Bailey have a habit of disappearing into the woods around here for weeks at a time, only to show up in the office later to announce ... we've got something for you to look at. It is always a pleasure to admire their latest handiwork.

Both graduates of Brevard College's Outdoor Leadership program, Jesse and Aaron are imaginative and creative in their approach to solving unique construction problems. Their challenge at the Reserve is to provide access to fragile environments without destroying what we are traveling to see.

When building the two bridges that cross the Vaseyi Creek above the pond, Jesse and Aaron were challenged with crossing a pristine creek under one of the largest natural stands of Vaseyi azaleas in existence .... all the while, doing so with a structure that complements the natural surroundings.

After a long search for just the right size locust tree, which had to have just the right curve and also be standing dead, the two craftsmen split the tree into matching halves, sawed a groove in the middle and then fit sawn locust boards into the groove to create the bridge planking. All the joints are mortise and tenon.

In the waterfall and cliff areas, the problem was pro-

Right, Aaron Bailey assists Veronica Lewandowski at the spiral staircase.



Above, Jesse Morgan at work on a Vaseyi bridge.



viding access to precarious areas that had previously required quite a bit of dicey scrambling up and down rock faces. The issue here, in addition to safety, was to provide a more comfortable access for hikers that were not expert outdoorsmen.

Aaron answered this challenge with iron steps and handrails drilled and cemented into the rock faces. What had once been a hike highlighted by scooting along by the seat of one's pants, can now be enjoyed in a much more comfortable position.

A particularly troublesome and complicated 90 degree descent problem was solved with an ingenious wooden spiral staircase.

Aaron's piece de resistance is the Via Ferrata. A 600 foot length of steel cable that provides access to a trail (Aaron calls it a trail; it is more like a two-inch seam in a sheer rock face) along the top of a cliff. A helmet, harness and double carabiner provide the traveler with confidence

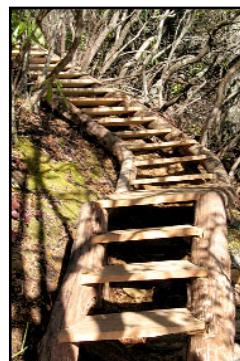
and double carabiner provide the traveler with confidence enough to enjoy the breathtaking views and special cliff dwelling plants along the way. The approach to the Via Ferrata is by an iron ladder that takes the climber to where the cable begins.

Jesse Morgan runs a business called Blue Ridge Rustics that specializes in outdoor furniture ranging from arbors and bridges to fences, gates and handrails.

Aaron Bailey's business is called Gravity's Edge. He does woodworking and specializes in, as the name implies, special projects involving rock traverses. Last year, Aaron constructed an aerial trek in Belize, South America that provides a unique opportunity to tour the jungle treetops via platforms and zip lines.

At present, Jesse Morgan is vacationing in Costa Rica and "hopefully, handing out business cards" according to Aaron.

When they collaborate at The Southern Highlands Reserve, attention to detail and fine craftsmanship are the hallmarks of their work.



Above, waterfall trail steps. Below, Sue Reid climbs iron cliff steps.



## The Southern Highlands Reserve News

Native Plant Arboretum and Research Center

Dedicated to the preservation, cultivation and display of plants native to the Southern Appalachian Highlands

### Russian Environmental Leaders Visit The Southern Highlands Reserve

"The most important thing I learned was that people here are open-hearted and open-minded. That was a big discovery for me."  
..... Sergey Beleyev



Robert Balentine and Natasha Boltukhova

Lunch at the home of Jack and Carole King



"The aim is to give emerging Russian leaders a deep insight into the U.S. lifestyle," said Natasha Boltukhova, trip facilitator and translator from Moscow.

The eight young Russian professionals with interests in conservation and environmental issues ended their nine day trip to the Western North Carolina area in December with a day long visit to The Southern Highlands Reserve.

The trip was sponsored by The Open World Center for Leadership Development at the Library of Congress and coordinated and hosted by J. Thomas Bertrand, former president of Brevard College and Chairman of the National Peace Foundation.

Bertrand learned about The Southern Highlands Reserve while visiting Jack and Carole King, neighbors and friends of TSHR. The Kings served lunch to the group after a seminar and hike at the Reserve.

The delegates participated in case study seminars of environmentally sensitive areas. TSHR was presented as an example of a visionary private initiative in contrast to large public endeavors such as The Great Smoky Mountain National Park and The Blue Ridge Parkway. The day before their visit to the Reserve, John Witherspoon, of Conservation Advisers in Brevard, presented a program about federal and state tax incentives for conserving private property through conservation easements.

"In Russia, the government doesn't provide incentives for being environmentally conscious," said Vladimir Shulekin, public information director for Sayanogorsk Aluminum, the largest aluminum company in the world.

The group also met with civic leaders and attended Christmas events in Brevard, and were guests of Congressman Charles Taylor at his annual Holiday Reception at The Grove Park Inn in Asheville.



Front Row, left to right: **Konstantin Romanov**, Consultant to the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation, in Moscow; **Natasha Boltukhova**, trip facilitator from Moscow; **Mayya Vorobyeva**, coordinator of the Russian Environmental Policy Center; **Yuliya Popova**, Director of the Ecological Law Clinic at Ecodal; **Mariya Favorskaya**, Head of the Reutovsky branch office of Guta-Bank; **Claudia Hilton**, Brevard resident and host coordinator for the group.

Back Row, left to right: **J. Thomas Bertrand**, Chairman of Board of Advisors of the National Peace Foundation; **Sergey Beleyev**, Department Head for Nature Management, Tourism, and Ecology for the Olkhonski District Administration; **Vladimir Shulekin**, Press Service Coordinator for the Sayanogorsk Aluminum Plant; **Lev Tretyakov**, Chief Specialist in the Ecosystem Protection Division of the City Administration of Perm; **Ivan Goncharov**, trip facilitator from the city of Yekaterinburg; **Dmitriy Boytsov**, Public Relations and Ecology Specialist with the limited liability corporation ECOMET-D.

### Via Ferrata ... the iron way



Above, Rick Lewandowski ascends the ladder to the Via Ferrata. Top inset, Ron Lance contemplates his position on a foggy morning.

## Barn completed, Wildflower Labyrinth in progress



Betty Bench area with close up of rock bench.

2005 saw the completion of major drainage work and Jack Owen's famous granite rock barn. Built with massive rock pillars and three-foot thick log beams, the barn, in addition to providing needed storage space for the staff, is a highlight of all Reserve tours.

Work on the Wildflower Labyrinth began this summer with the installation of boulder retaining walls and steps. This fall, work began on the labyrinth paths, which will be constructed of large slabs of cut granite.



Center above, Travis Owen and Jeff Chandler cut path stones for the labyrinth walkway while, at right, Jack Owen directs placement of a large stone on the perimeter of the Wildflower Labyrinth.

Adjacent to the labyrinth is a completed grassy area called 'The Betty Bench' ... so named because Betty Balentine provided the inspiration for the unique rock bench.



The completed barn, above, and at left, barn interior with beams and rock columns.

### The Southern Highlands Reserve forms ties with associate gardens

No matter the term used ... friend, bond, relationship, rapport, connection ... nothing is more important to a beginning garden like TSHR than alliances with other established and experienced gardens. We are fortunate to have created bonds this year with Rick Lewandowski and The Mt. Cuba Center in Greenville, DE. Mt. Cuba is a 600 acre garden whose mission is 'to foster an appreciation for plants of the Appalachian Piedmont through gardens, education and research'.

Visits to Mt. Cuba by Robert Balentine and John Turner have proven to be indispensable in our planning efforts. We hope to build on this relationship in the future by continuing visits between the two gardens and their staff. Rick visited TSHR this spring with his wife, Veronica, and later in the summer with friends from other gardens.



Paul Meyer, left, director of The Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia, Robert Balentine, center, and Rick Lewandowski, director of Mt. Cuba Center, check out the latest data collector for plant record information.



Left to right: Fred Spicer, director, Birmingham Botanical Gardens; Jeanne Frett, research horticulturist, Mt. Cuba Center; Janie Bryan, seed program curator, NC Botanical Garden; Dr. Andrew Bell, assoc. director, NC Botanical Garden; Rick Lewandowski, director, Mt. Cuba Center and Richard Bryson, native plant specialist, The Southern Highlands Reserve.

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A private operating foundation dedicated to the preservation, cultivation and display of plants native to the Southern Appalachian Highlands

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Mrs. Elizabeth G. Balentine  
Mr. Steven F. Whitmire  
Mr. Frank W. Armstrong III  
Mr. John McCarley

Executive Director:  
Mr. John A. Turner

### Dick Bir awarded prestigious Scott Medal from Scott Arboretum

After many years of accomplishment, Dick Bir is this year's recipient of one of the most distinguished honors in the field of horticultural education and research.

Awarded annually by Swarthmore College since 1930, the Scott Medal is presented to "an individual, organization or corporate body who, in the opinion of the Selection Committee, has made an outstanding national contribution to the science and the art of gardening."

The staff and board of The Southern Highlands Reserve, honored to count Dick as a friend and associate, extend our congratulations to Dick and his wife, Susan, on this most well-deserved honor.



Dick Bir and Vivian Abney inspect rhododendron seedlings

### Woodsman, hunter ... friend to neighbors and strangers alike

He settled me in Bohaney, now known as Whitewater, 33 years ago. He helped me build a house and raise my kids. He taught me to hunt, drive nails, split wood, run a chain saw and grow a garden. Now, he's 75 and says he's retiring in the spring. Nobody really believes that, it's probably another one of his tricks ... that twinkle in his eye always gives him away.

Coke, or Copus, depending on your mood, is about as central to Bohaney as the rock face on Rocky Knob Mountain that his front porch looks out on. He's an antique man, they're not made anymore ... rock solid and as steady as they come, quick with a story or a knowing wink. His remarks seem like secrets kept between gray-haired boys.

In his younger days, his stamina in the woods was legendary. A well-known coon and deer hunter in these parts, Coke could walk forever with a steady and methodic pace, in and out of any patch of woods or up and down any mountain ... much to the dismay of many a game warden.

Always quick to help friends and neighbors no matter what the task at hand, Coke is an astute judge of character. One of his favorite sayings is "you can always tell a man when it comes to money."



Coleman Kenney

Coke and Lovine's front porch is a favorite Sunday afternoon gathering place .... one of those places where time stops but good times keep right on going.

Remind me to tell you sometime about the time I walked up to Coke's and found he and my two boys, six and eight years old, in his front yard pulling a live rattlesnake tied to a string .....

by John Turner

### Reserve Focus, Coleman Kenney

### TSHR nursery provides native plants for gardens at the Reserve

Coke Kenney has been putting his well-known green thumb to good use for the past three years at The Southern Highlands Reserve nursery.

As nursery manager, Coke is responsible for potting and growing as many as 15,000 four-inch pots of native plants each year.

Coke, who previously owned the land where the nursery is located, lives just several hundred yards from the nursery. Before TSHR began nursery functions there, Coke and John Turner operated a nursery at this location for over 20 years.

Located about ten miles from the Reserve at a 3000 foot elevation, the TSHR nursery consists of two enclosed greenhouses, a potting and storage facility and three shade houses that cover nine hoop structures for four-inch and one-gallon pots. Larger two, three and five-gallon plants are grown on gravel beds adjacent to the shade houses.

Although some plants are propa-

gated from seed at the nursery, most plants are received as plugs, small plants about the size of your thumb, and potted into four-inch pots in either early spring or early fall.

Plugs potted in the spring are scheduled for planting in mid-summer, while plants potted in the fall are slated to be planted the following spring.

Plants that are not planted on schedule must be potted into larger pots, probably a one-gallon pot, that will allow roots to continue to grow unimpeded until they can be planted.

Most of the plants grown at the nursery so far have been planted in the Woodland Glade and Vaseyi Pond



Coke Kenney pictured above at overwintering hoop structures and right, in greenhouse with dormant 4" pots.

areas at the Reserve.

This year, most of the plants grown at the nursery will be planted in the Wildflower Labyrinth.

Of special interest at the nursery is a group of 300 Red Spruce seedlings that have been growing for three years and are ready to be planted at the Reserve this spring.